

November 15, 2013

The Honorable Terry Branstad
Governor, State of Iowa
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Branstad:

This letter is sent on behalf of the Iowa Council on Homelessness, fulfilling its requirement pursuant to Iowa Code Sections 16.100A(9)(a) and 16.100A(8)(g) to advise the governor's office and make annual recommendations regarding strategies to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Iowa.

I am pleased to report to you that Iowa is in step with federal goals to end homelessness. "Opening Doors" is a federal interagency effort to end homelessness, authorized by the Homeless Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The Council is committed to advancing the goals of both Opening Doors and the HEARTH Act which combined call for an end to chronic homelessness and homelessness among veterans by 2015, and an end to all homelessness by 2020.

Recent reports provided by the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances indicate a 50% decrease in people "living on the streets" or otherwise in unsheltered situations. Simultaneously there has been a 9% decrease in people using emergency shelters and transitional housing throughout the state. Furthermore, the fact that there has been a 52% decrease in the length of stays in the homelessness system in the past two years is particularly compelling given that a fundamental principle of the HEARTH Act emphasizes limiting the length of homelessness experienced by individuals and families. As a state we are moving in the right direction and making measurable progress towards reducing homelessness.

This progress is the culmination of the work, effort, talent, and determination of many. In communities throughout our state we work daily with public and private partners to best leverage limited resources. We rely heavily on our collaboration with our colleagues at the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances and their dedication to excellence in reporting. We are deeply grateful for the professionalism, administrative support, technical and financial assistance, and partnership provided by the Iowa Finance Authority.

We thank you personally for your leadership and administration's investment in furthering our capacity to develop a coordinated and seamless service delivery system to more strategically utilize resources. Through your support and in partnership with the Iowa Finance Authority we are working with the State Policy and Planning Group (SPPG) to:

- Identify and establish regional planning bodies for the State of Iowa
- Develop common service, operating and performance standards for Outreach Programs, Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing (to include

Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, Homelessness Prevention and Housing First).

- Implement reporting tools to accurately document newly agreed upon performance measures for the continuum of providers indicated above.

Following the completion of this project in June of 2014, I look forward to providing an update to your office on our progress.

Homeless service providers across our state address the needs of some of our most vulnerable Iowans. Together, we help men, women, & their families to get back on their feet and move beyond homelessness—keeping children in school, getting adults back to work, providing access to health services and resources for the disabled and elderly, and helping move individuals and families into their own homes. Through this we not only improve the quality of the lives of the men, women, and children who walk through our doors but in so doing improve the health, safety and well-being of the communities within which we work.

It is with deepest gratitude that I write and with the hope for continuation of funding that your administration and this state invests in the Council and our continuum of homelessness services. We are good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by our communities, the State of Iowa and the federal government and intend to better demonstrate this collectively. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information or concerns related to the work of the Iowa Council on Homelessness (phone at (319)530-4735, e-mail at aaxeen@mchsi.com and post at 706 10th Avenue, Coralville, IA 52241).

Sincerely,

Allan Axeen
Chair, Iowa Council on Homelessness

CC: Amber Lewis, Iowa Finance Authority
Julie Eberbach, Iowa Institute for Community Alliances
Members of the Iowa Council on Homelessness